

Residents adopt community approach



WAYNE CLEMONS JR. / For The Sun

Victoria Nguyen, left, and Angela Lee observe Jim McIntosh, chairman of the North Central Neighborhood Steering Committee in Loma Linda, examine the moisture and worm content at a plot at the Loma Linda Community Garden.

Neighborhood picks itself up

By JANET M. HARP
Staff Writer

LOMA LINDA — When a neighborhood committee started up three years ago, Jim McIntosh had no interest in getting involved.

The north-central neighborhood was so economically depressed, a group setting out to improve it appeared destined for disappointment.

But with a little curiosity and a push from his wife, McIntosh started attending the meetings and found himself both a challenge and a hobby.

"Everybody has 24 hours and you fill it with what's important," he said. "That became one of the things that was important enough for me to put my time into."

The North Central Neighborhood Steering Committee began as part of the city's goal to upgrade and beautify the area

known for its older homes and apartment complexes within the borders of Redlands Boulevard, Van Leuven Street, Anderson Street and Mountain View Avenue.

As city officials initiated action, so did residents, and the effort has since grown into a standout community project.

"All of this has just really been a collaborative effort of city staff and residents," said Joanne Heilman, executive secretary to City Manager Dennis Halloway.

When the committee began, meetings were held everywhere, from parks to members' homes. These days, the members — about 10 city employees and residents — meet once a month in the Community Room at City Hall. The next meeting is at 6 p.m. Oct. 26.

"When the committee started, it was pretty pathetic and

See GROUP/B5

“

When the committee started, it was pretty pathetic and anemic. But it keeps evolving, it expands and contracts, but it is living and growing.”

JIM MCINTOSH

Committee chairman

Group

Continued from B1

anemic," said McIntosh, now the committee chairman. "But it keeps evolving, it expands and contracts, but it is living and growing."

The group works to improve health and quality of life in the neighborhood by focusing on beautification, safety, outreach and redevelopment.

But work goes far beyond discussing the issues.

With the help of Public Works Director T. Jarb Thaipejr and other City Hall staff, the committee has provided funds for street pavement, sidewalks, curbs, gutters and community programs.

"That neighborhood really needed some help," Mayor Pro Tem Floyd Petersen said. "We got started on this idea of getting the residents involved with rejuvenating the neighborhood and there's been incredible improvements."

"I'm really pleased with the initiative that the whole committee has taken."

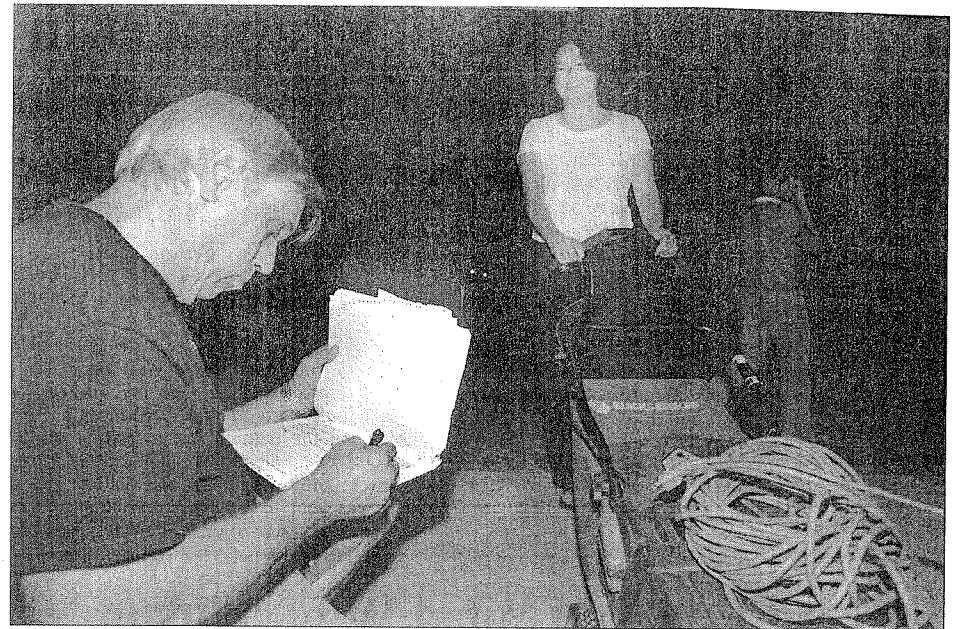
In May 2002 the Loma Linda Community Garden opened on the north-central neighborhood's Van Leuven Street. Area residents were encouraged to grow fruits and vegetables while getting to know their neighbors.

Today, 51 of the garden's 53 sites are rented out for a yearly refundable fee of \$20. Water and tools are provided for the 8-by-12-foot plots.

"It all started with the garden," said Heilman, the garden manager. "That was the focal point, and everything else came from there."

Residents of nearby apartments, members of the senior center, students and families are some of those who garden.

"We want to promote healthy



WAYNE CLEMONS JR. / For The Sun

Jim McIntosh checks out an electric lawnmower to Victoria Nguyen from the group's tool library in Loma Linda.

nutrition and physical activity," Heilman said. "That in combination with other projects promotes a better lifestyle and livability."

As part of beautification efforts, a tool library was added to the garden, providing residents with lawnmowers, power tools, ladders and paintbrushes.

"Some people just can't believe we have something like this," said McIntosh, who operates the tool library. "Most of them can't afford these things, but they can afford to check them out."

"Everything gets used. The paintbrushes were the only things that used to just sit there, and those finally got used, too."

If residents want to perform more work or repairs on their homes, they can apply for \$200 grants. The Grants for Blocks program was started as a solution for code compliance but has



come to help residents start larger projects for their homes.

Some use it to install sprinklers, grow grass or paint their houses, McIntosh said. All they have to do is fill out an application and meet the guidelines.

For improvements on a larger scale, the city has started the Housing Improvement Program. Because much of the north-

central neighborhood was developed before the city's incorporation in 1970, many homes were constructed without permits and don't meet codes, said City Clerk Pamela Byrnes-O'Camb, who is housing coordinator for the Redevelopment Agency.

"We go into areas where there is dilapidation and where they are not up to code and it would cost too much to bring them up to code," Byrnes-O'Camb said at a recent committee meeting.

The city then buys out the property and rebuilds or revitalizes it for low- to moderate-income families.

Residents of the north-central neighborhood also participate in a Neighborhood Watch program, notifying sheriff's deputies of possible crime, suspicious activities or code violations.

Contact writer Janet M. Harp at (909) 335-2540 or via e-mail at janet.harp@sbsun.com.